



REPRODUCED FROM THE SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER JULY 16TH 1889

HER LIFE FOR HER MILLIONS.



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The Remarkable

Everybody in California knew Thomas H. Blythe, the eccentric millionaire who used to stand for hours contemplating his block in San Francisco—a block that corresponds to that bounded by Fifth avenue, Broadway and Twenty-seventh street, in New York. A crabbed, close-mouthed, pursy little old man he was, with two weaknesses—one for women and the other an insane fear of a rival suitor, who had a mortgage on some of his property—property Blythe had taken unwillingly on a debt when it was a sand hill suburb of San Francisco.

Everybody knew him and nobody had ever heard him speak of a relative, except the nameless little girl in England, but they came from all over the world like buzzards to a carcass when his death and the great fortune he had left was heralded. The little girl and the English family were of the flight and almost the first to arrive.

the baristers from Britain and the assaults on the child's claim have to be passed by. Florence was a fifteen-year-old girl when the trial began. She was nearly seventeen when the case was decided in her favor. The whole State was interested in the child.

and she was guarded by detectives. With all the surroundings of romance and melodrama, she remained a simple, unaffected little girl. It was an odd school for an upstartable child, this court room full of hired friends and natural enemies, but it did not seem to change her much.

plunged with her great fortune; neither has she become stingy. No woman whose family had millions for generations ever born the weights of a fortune with more unconsciousness than she does. In her case money has made a lady of the nameless child of the victors old man who changed his name and the vulgar young woman he found on a London street.

N EARLY a score of years ago a family arrived here from England, en route to San Francisco. The family consisted of a smart, cheap, sharp-muzzled old man, a raspy, rancous, richly dressed red-faced young woman and a wondering, gawky little girl, whose protruding upper lip showed the lack of a couple of front teeth—her milk teeth gone and their successors not yet come.

The cheap people. Everything about the state of London slums and cockney smartness. Their appearance told no untruth. The old man was "Dr." Crisp Perry, who had seen the inside of several of Her Majesty's prisons for medical variations of bunco. The young woman was his daughter, Mrs. Joe Ashcroft, who had left a drunken, wife-beating husband somewhere in London, and the little girl was her daughter, Florence Blythe—a bit of an eccentricity she already possessed when she married Joe Ashcroft, but Joe didn't mind, for reasons that will become plain as this true tale develops.

A queer family they were, and a queer mission they came on.

They were here to claim for the little girl one of the largest fortunes in America, the fortune of her father, who was never her mother's husband.

All this was years ago. James Crisp Perry is dead. He was thrown from a buggy and killed, and it is not on record that anybody mourned much for him.

Mrs. Joe Ashcroft has disappeared from the stage—pensioned off, the reports have it. I lost track of her years ago. Joe Ashcroft never came into the drama, though his name runs all through the story.

The little girl is now a widow with a fortune of millions. The huge money pile built by Thomas H. Blythe has come to her at last—that is, all of it that did not go to the lawyers, and this remainder was enough to make a dozen attorneys wealthy. For such is the way of the law.

Every step on the girl's road to riches was fought. Claimants by scores and lawyers by hundreds struggled for the money.

It was seven or eight years before the courts could get the case in shape for a trial, and when they did the lawyers sat down to the most extraordinary legal table ever set. From the date of the death of the kinless man his kinsmen gathered.

Two widows came forward, his wife, his sisters, parents, nieces, nephews, grand relatives, all came to try for the great prize. By the time the case came to trial Blythe's property had grown to be worth \$4,000,000.

California had to pass a special law to make the trial of the suit possible.

Under it Florence Blythe, the little English girl, brought suit against all the others for the estate. Among the defendants in the case were:

- Alfred Edith Dickason Blythe (alleged widow).
- Nellie Firmin (alleged widow).
- The London Blythes.
- The Liverpool Blythes.
- The Gypsy Blythes.
- The Blythe Company (an incorporation of unassorted claimants).
- The Savages (who claimed that Blythe had changed his name from Savage because he was a convict or something of that sort).
- The Williamsons (whose contention was about the same, and, except that Blythe's real name was William, who had the satisfaction of having the Court decide that they were probably right).
- The shoe-maker, Savage (whose claim seemed principally based on a family resemblance which bore a coat of arms similar to the garbages that Blythe put up over the door to one of his buildings).

The widows were declared no widows; all though Blythe had died in the arms of one of them, and had introduced her as his wife to various people who knew better, but this was only the easy-going way of the easy-going West.

It is hard to pass over that trial—the court sat for over a year to the exclusion of all other litigation before it was over—without describing the queer folk that appeared and the queer things that happened, but this is the story of the little light of love who came to a royal fortune, and



MILLIONAIRE BLYTHE AND HIS LITTLE DAUGHTER

patient through it all. She had to hear the story from her vulgar mother's lips of her mother on a London street of the rich child scamp from California who accosted her without introduction and followed her home.

The mother said Blythe "promised to marry her, and maybe he did."

It was a long and bitter fight for the millions, and during its pendency the eyes of the whole Pacific coast were turned toward the little girl and the little girl's claim. There was mention of kidnapping and other dark plots, and she had not her fortune yet.

ALPS ARE TO DISAPPEAR.

Professor von Schöen's discovery that rocks live like plants and animals, or even human beings, has induced another savant to figure out when the Alps, or at least a part of them, are to be obliterated. These are the interesting calculations:

The Swiss river Aare, which rises in the upper Bernese plateau and traverses 170 miles of rocky country, annually carries 325,000 cubic metres of rocks torn from their native environment into the Lake of Brienz, whose bed changes constantly in consequence. This lake, which has now a length of nearly nine miles and is about three miles broad, formerly reached up to Meltingen, thirty miles from Bern. It took the Aare from fourteen to fifteen thousand years to push the lake from its original bed [into that now occupied] says our savant, and continues: "Thirty-five or forty thousand years will pass before the present lake is filled up by the rocks which the Aare carries into it."

The Aare, it is declared, tears from each square kilometre of rocks to it every 250 cubic metres per annum, thus "wearing the Alps by one metre every 3,333 years. The head of the Aare coming from a height of 2,200 metres the Aare glaciers will be razed in 7,500,000 years, and the last rock of the proud Alps will be killed off and ground to sand in 10,000,000 years.

Story of a Venomous Fight for Money from Babyhood, Through Girlhood, to Widowhood.



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